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THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY

THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY is a training monastery and retreat centre following the Soto Zen Buddhist tradition. The Priory is affiliated with Shasta Abbey whose Spiritual Director is Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, M.O.B.C. Shasta Abbey is the headquarters of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives of the Soto Zen Church and is located in Mount Shasta, California. The monks of Throssel Hole Priory are members of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives and follow the teaching and example of Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett.

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THE JOURNAL OF THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY is published as a service to all those who are seriously interested in the practice of Buddhism. Through the Journal, members and friends of the Priory are able to share their experience and understanding of Buddhist training. Opinions expressed in each article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Abbot, the Editor, or Throssel Hole Priory. The Journal is published quarterly and costs £6.00 p.a.

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News from the Tiger's Lair



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[News from the Tiger's Lair is reprinted from the *Journal of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives*, Volume 3, Number 3, and appears here with the kind permission of the author Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, M.O.B.C., Abbess of Shasta Abbey].

Rules For Meditation

It has occurred to me, and to the rest of us here as well, that the time has come to make the "Zazen Rules" clearer. We are, after all, English and not Japanese and the retention of words such as "Zazen" and a few others that have appeared in this Scripture in the past would be better understood in translation into English. We are also removing from the Scripture the description of how to do cross-legged sitting since most Westerners, unless they have been trained to do this from childhood, find it injurious to their bodies. It is interesting that many young Japanese are also now finding this an impossible means of sitting; we were informed of this by a representative of the Head Office in Tokyo. Those who wish to continue to sit cross-legged may, of course, do so (no one is forced to change in this respect) but the Egyptians did extremely well at their meditation with their feet down and so do a large number of Westerners. Since we do not wish to continue to give the impression that sitting cross-legged is the only way to sit, we are

removing the instructions with regard to this from the new "Rules for Meditation." The following, therefore, is the translation we are using from here on.

Rules for Meditation

Why are training and enlightenment differentiated since the Truth is universal? Why study the means of attaining it since the supreme teaching is free? Since Truth is seen to be clearly apart from that which is unclean, why cling to a means of cleansing it? Since Truth is not separate from training, training is unnecessary - however, the separation would be as that between heaven and earth if even the slightest gap exists * FOR WHEN THE OPPOSITES ARISE, THE BUDDHA MIND IS LOST. However much you may be proud of your understanding, however much you may be enlightened, whatever your attainment of wisdom and supernatural power, your finding of the way to mind illumination, your power to touch heaven and to enter into enlightenment, when the opposites arise you have almost lost the way to salvation. Although the Buddha had great wisdom at birth, He sat in training for six years; although Bodhidharma Transmitted the Buddha Mind, we still hear the echoes of his nine years facing a wall. The Ancestors were very diligent and there is no reason why we people of the present day cannot understand. All you have to do is cease from erudition, withdraw within and reflect upon yourself. Should you be able to cast off body and mind naturally, the Buddha Mind will immediately manifest itself. If you want to find it quickly you must start at once.

You should meditate in a quiet room, eat and drink moderately, cut all ties, give up everything, think of neither good nor evil, consider neither right nor wrong. Control mind function, will, consciousness, memory, perception and understanding; you must not strive thus to become Buddha. Cling to neither sitting nor lying down. When meditating do not wear tight clothing. Place the left hand in the palm of the right hand with the thumbs touching lightly; sit upright, leaning neither to left nor right, backwards nor for-

wards. The ears must be in line with the shoulders and the nose in line with the navel; the tongue must be held lightly against the back of the top teeth with the lips and teeth closed. Keep the eyes open, breathe in quickly, settle the body comfortably and breathe out sharply. Sway the body left and right then sit steadily, neither trying to think nor trying not to think; just sitting with no deliberate thought is the important aspect of serene reflection meditation.

This type of meditation is not something that is done in stages; it is simply the lawful gateway to carefree peace. To train and enlighten ourselves is to become thoroughly wise; the koan appears *naturally* in daily life. If you become thus utterly free you will be as the water wherein the dragon dwells or as the mountain whereon the tiger roams. Understand clearly that the Truth appears naturally and then your mind will be free from doubts and vacillation. When you wish to arise from meditation, sway the body gently from side to side and arise quietly; the body must make no violent movement; I myself have seen that the ability to die whilst sitting and standing, which transcends both peasant and sage, is obtained through the power of serene reflection meditation. It is no more possible to understand natural activity with the judgemental mind than it is possible to understand the signs of enlightenment; nor is it possible to understand training and enlightenment by supernatural means; such understanding is outside the realm of speech and vision, such Truth is beyond personal opinions. Do not discuss the wise and the ignorant, there is only one thing - to train hard for this is true enlightenment; training and enlightenment are naturally undefiled; to live in this way is the same as to live an ordinary daily life. The Buddha Seal has been preserved by both the Buddhas in the present world and by those in the world of the Indian and Chinese Ancestors, they are thus always spreading the Truth - all activity is permeated with pure meditation - the means of training are thousandfold but pure meditation must be done. It is futile to travel to other dusty countries thus forsaking your own seat; if your

The Threefold Lotus Scripture

Rev. Daishin Morgan, 'M.O.B.C.

[This article and an occasional series of articles to appear in future issues are extracts from edited transcripts of a series of lectures recorded for the benefit of meditation groups. The translation used is *The Threefold Lotus Sutra* by Bruno Kato and W.E. Soothill et al., published by Weatherhill. Passages are quoted by kind permission of the copyright holders Rissbo Kosei-kai. Readers are strongly advised to study this translation and not rely on these notes alone for a clear insight into this scripture. D.M.]

Chapter Three.

The Parable of the Burning House.

Shariputra⁽¹⁾ is ecstatic with joy at being able to hear the Great Vehicle. Although in the past he received teaching from the World Honoured One, he only managed to understand it superficially. He spent days and nights in self-reproach; now, however, having properly prepared himself, he is at last able to hear truly the teaching and, as a result, the Buddha proclaims that Shariputra will become a Buddha in the future. Shariputra finally hears of and believes in his own Buddha Nature and knows it, from experience, within himself. The Buddhas do not make the path obscure; it is the opinions and preconceptions of the disciples that create the obstructions. The Great Way is always being offered; it is up to us to rise to the level of this teaching; it cannot come down to the level of duality. Shariputra is like many of us in that he suffered from fear and doubt on first hearing the Buddha's teaching. He feared it was the voice of Mara that he heard but, in time, his heart became as peaceful as the sea due to the skilful teaching of the Buddha. The Buddha Nature within Shariputra recognises the truth of the Buddha's words and, because they lead him to peace, he gains confidence and realises that

such teaching is true and not the work of Mara. Once he has overcome his doubts he is able to hear in the deepest reaches of his heart.

What does it take to overcome one's doubt? One must come to know the essence of the doubt. It does not really matter whether something is done in accordance with our opinions or not, yet we invest so much energy in being right that we go blind. If I hold tightly to the opinion that I am right and you do not agree, then you, as far as I am concerned, are wrong. If you are wrong then that is a cause for you to doubt yourself. On the other hand, if you are right then I must be wrong and that is cause for you to doubt me. By investing so heavily in an opinion of how the world is, I end up either doubting you or doubting myself. People's views become polarised when they lose sight of the heart of those with whom they disagree. What I am getting at is the need to see beyond the pros and cons of a decision to the heart of oneself and all beings. This vision transforms an argument into two people seeking a common end. You may still not agree, but now you can see that you are not your opinion and neither is the other person identified with their opinion. The essential faith is that the other person's heart is good. What matters is that we see the essential nature of doubt itself, that it comes down to doubt in ourselves and the Eternal. We need to realise that doubt is an internal problem and then we can let go of our involvement with the external events that caused it to arise and meditate on why we doubt ourselves. The cure for doubting ourselves and/or the Eternal is knowledge of what we and the Eternal really are. This knowledge is gained by looking directly at what we are. We are afraid in case we find that we are nothing, or worse still, that we are evil. Simply be still in the fear and go on regardless. If we are evil then we are evil whether we face it or not; but we are not evil, nor need we fear extinction. It is far better to find out for sure, to take the risk, for the result is an end to doubt and fear, a life of freedom and peace. In truth there really is no risk, our true nature and the nature of the Eternal is pure love,

pure compassion and pure wisdom, but we must face the fear in order to come to certain knowledge of this.

The Buddha then relates the parable of the burning house. In a certain kingdom there is a great elder who is possessed of infinite wealth. His house is spacious and large with many people dwelling in it, all of whom are His sons and daughters. However, the house is terribly decayed and dangerous: there are all kinds of horrific beings within waiting to prey upon the occupants. Suddenly on every side the house bursts into flames, and the elder, seeing the conflagration, calls to His sons and daughters to come out of the house but they are too absorbed in their amusements to heed him. They lack the perception to realise that they are in desperate danger and have no fear or impulse to escape. The elder tries to admonish them, he tries to lure them out, but they simply do not understand what he is talking about when he speaks of the fire, the house and the fact that they are about to be lost. They just run hither and thither in play with only the occasional glance towards their father. The elder knows that in this desperate situation, if he does not get them out by some means, all will very soon be lost. Accordingly, being aware of all the attractive playthings to which each of them is attached, he says to them that if they do not come outside at once, they will miss their opportunity to have these rarest and most precious things that they want. He promises that a variety of goat carts, deer carts and bullock carts await them outside the gate. When the children hear this and because the playthings suit their wishes, they all come eagerly, each pushing the other, racing out of the burning house.

When the elder sees that his children have safely escaped, he is no longer troubled and he sits down in the square, whereupon his children demand the presents that he promised them. However, the elder gives to each of the children a great cart, lofty and spacious and far greater than the goat, deer or bullock carts that he spoke of in the house. The cart that he gives them is adorned with all the seven precious things, it

is pulled by a great bullock of the purest white that can walk with even steps with the speed of the wind. The elder reflects that his wealth is infinite and so he must not give his children inferior carts. Since all are his sons and daughters he must bestow his greatest gift with equal mind to each one, without discrimination.

The Buddha says that in this circumstance the elder is not guilty of falsehood any more than is He Himself as the father of all the world

who has forever entirely ended all his fear, despondency, distress, ignorance, and umbrageous darkness and has perfected his boundless knowledge, powers, and fearlessness; . . . is possessed of great spiritual powers and wisdom; who is greatly merciful and compassionate, ever seeking the good, and benefiting all beings. The Buddha is born into this triple world, the old decayed burning house, to save all living creatures from the fires of birth, old age, disease, death, grief, suffering, foolishness, darkness, and the three poisons [greed, hatred and delusion], and [to] teach them to obtain Perfect Enlightenment. He sees how all living creatures are scorched by the fires of birth, old age, disease and death . . . by reason of the five desires and the greed for gain; and how, by reason of the attachment of desire and its pursuits, they now endure much suffering and hereafter will suffer in hell, or as animals or hungry spirits; even if they are born in heaven, or amongst men, there are such various kinds of suffering as poverty, distress, separation from loved ones, and union with hateful beings. Absorbed in these things, all living creatures take their pleasure, while they neither apprehend nor perceive, are neither alarmed nor fear, and are without satiety, never seeking to escape but in the burning house of this triple world running about hith-

er and thither, and although they will meet with great suffering, count it not a cause for anxiety.

Seeing the state that living beings are in, the Buddha realises that people are caught up in worldly mind and cannot understand the deepest teaching so an expedient is needed. Accordingly the Tathagata teaches the three vehicles saying how they will lead to happiness and infinite peace and joy. Those having the spirit of wisdom, who follow the Buddha and hear the teaching in faith, make progress and desire to escape from the triple world whilst seeking nirvana for themselves - these will have the Sravaka vehicle, the goat cart in the parable. The deer cart is for those who, in addition to the Sravaka qualities, also seek self-gained wisdom, that is, they do not yet rely entirely upon the Eternal yet they delight in the peace attained through their practice and are deeply versed in the twelve nidanas (dependent origination). These are the Pratyeka-Buddhas. The Bodhisattvas are those who leave the 'house' for the sake of the bullock cart. They are those who hear the law and zealously follow the Buddha's wisdom in faith and with diligent practice, and advance, seeking the complete wisdom of the Buddha, the knowledge, power and fearlessness of the Tathagata. They take pity on and comfort innumerable creatures and save all beings.

To each of these three kinds of trainees the Buddha wishes to give his greatest gift, The Great Vehicle. No one will gain an individual nirvana,

but all gain nirvana by the same nirvana as the Tathagata.

The scripture shows that there is no such thing as an individual nirvana. There is nothing we attain; we give up the self that grasps and slip into the shining sea, the same sea that embraces Shakyamuni and all the Buddhas. Thus Great Master Dogen says that all the Buddhas become Shakyamuni when they reach enlightenment.

To become free of birth and death, to come out of the burning house, is only part of the answer: full nirvana is to go on and attain the Buddha-wisdom. To depart from the false is the beginning but the supreme way must be attained. In terms of *The Scripture of Great Wisdom*, a being must always be, "Going on, going on, always going on, always becoming Buddha." There is further to go even when one's karma has been cleansed.

The burning house is the state of being caught in samsara - the worldly mind wherein one is in a state of ignorance - ignoring the warnings of danger that surround us. Birth and death are suffering and yet we persist in trying to find salvation in that which is burning. The teaching of the One Vehicle is to seek the Eternal above everything else. Too many people are half hearted in training, they play about like children in a burning house, "Casting the occasional glance towards their father." It is not enough to sit in meditation once in a while; if you want to escape from the burning house and enter the Buddha-way, training must embrace all of your life, everything must be offered to the Eternal Buddha. When this is done you can clearly hear the teaching of the Buddha above the crackle of the flames.

Note

1. The Sanskrit spelling with diacritical marks for this word is śariputra. We are using Shariputra in this article because this is roughly how it is pronounced. [Ed.]

* * *

Going Forward in Faith

Rev. Fuden Nessi, F.O.B.C.

Some of us have the tendency to hang on to, and keep dwelling upon, our shortcomings and faults in a way which is not constructive at all. Of course, it is essential in training that we are willing at all times to look at and acknowledge our faults, and to repent of them, and then be prepared to make any necessary changes in our life as well. After having resolved to work hard on our faults, though, we then need to move on in faith, and with courage and determination.

Yet often we find it difficult to let go of the faults we see in ourselves. By dwelling on these in a judgemental way, we start to look down upon, and maintain doubts about, ourselves. Sometimes we even start to doubt the process of training itself. There is a fine line between the positive and very important willingness to face our faults and wish to change, and the unconstructive and judgemental dwelling on these faults. We have to learn where this line is so that we don't keep overstepping it, thus only complicating matters and adding to the suffering.

We need to trust the heart, and the help which comes from the Three Treasures, as well as learning to trust ourselves and our sincerity in training. So after having wholeheartedly accepted our faults and sincerely resolved to change, we have to walk on with true faith. This underlying faith is, I believe, what Great Master Dogen meant when he wrote:

One who would train in Buddhism must first believe completely therein and, in order to do so, one must believe that one has already found the Way, never having been lost, deluded, upside-down, increasing, decreasing,

or mistaken in the first place: one must train oneself thus, believing thus, in order to make the Way clear; this is the ground for Buddhist study. (1)

This faith in the Buddha Nature is what enables us to move forward and not stay stuck with the shadows and imperfections.

In the *Vimalakirti Nirdeśa* scripture, there is a passage which also talks about this point: (2) Vimalakirti tells Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva that a Bodhisattva should not be distressed because of his or her *klesa* (defilements), and that instead they should give rise to zeal and devotion in training. What is meant here, of course, is not that one should take the defilements and impediments lightly. One should take them very seriously at all times! What is emphasised here is that once these things have been openly and fully faced and learned from, and we are sincerely determined not to get caught by them any more, we should not start to look down and get depressed because of the impediments. Instead, we should energetically and with faith move on from there, determined to make a greater effort in training.

I remember a difficult period in my life when I started to recognise more fully some of my faults. The awareness of these faults was quite distressing. Time and time again, I kept ruminating over them and dragging them up; it seemed I was unable (or unwilling) to offer them up and move on. Because of this, I started to doubt myself and my sincerity more and more as time went by. These doubts got so bad that at times it was even difficult to speak to others, or to take the next step in daily life.

During this difficult time both the inner voice and my seniors often admonished me: 'Look to the Refuge now. It is time to let go of the faults.' Fortunately I eventually started to put this important advice into practice; gradually, I was again able to sense the small light within the dark clouds. This

light is active faith, our willingness once more to trust.

If our focus is only on the mistakes and faults, and if we lose sight of the True Refuge, that which has to move cannot do so. This does not mean, though, we can ever afford to lose sight of the work which still needs to be done. We must keep an especially close watch on those areas in our training where we had difficulty in the past, or are still having difficulties with. But for the work of conversion and cleansing to happen, we cannot lose sight of the True Refuge.

The problem is also that sometimes, instead of accepting our difficulties fully and then being willing to offer them in meditation, we try to resolve them with our heads in a desperate, and often frustrated, effort. It is as though we fear something may get missed if we don't approach the difficulty in this way.

Again, we need to learn to trust more deeply, to have faith that if we truly accept the suffering and problems, offering them in meditation and taking refuge in the Three Treasures, we will be shown if there is something we still need to look at. We can then learn from the difficulty. By being still and trusting, we will also know how to keep the Precepts more deeply. *'From Serene Reflection Meditation, the Precepts arise eternally....'* (3)

What does it mean to make an offering of our suffering and difficulties? Rev. Master Jiyu has emphasised the importance of the cleansing and the returning of all things to the Eternal, 'no matter what may come up, whether they are thoughts that distract and worry, attachments that seem impossible to break, longings or just past karma. Return them all to the Eternal; let them go up; let them leave. Do not hold on to them. Let them go as do the prayers, as it were, in a pinch of incense smoke and sit up straight in the presence of the Buddhas and Ancestors when

they go.' (4)

* * *

Notes

1. From 'Gyakudo-yojinshu' [Aspects of Zazen] by Great Master Keizan, in *Zen is Eternal Life* by Roshi P.T.N.H. Jiyu-Kennett (Mount Shasta, California: Shasta Abbey Press, 1987), p. 138.
2. *The Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra*, trans. & ed. by Lu K'uan Luk [Charles Luk], (Berkeley and London: Shambhala Publications Inc., 1972), p. 53.
3. Jiyu-Kennett, *Zen is Eternal Life*, p. 274.
4. From an unpublished lecture.

* * *

...We are fortunate in that, in this life, we have the opportunity to offer pure food to the Three Treasures. How lucky we are: how blessed in this body: for all eternity there will be no greater opportunity than that offered to us now; its merit is undefileable. When we serve our fellow trainees purely, hundreds and thousands of lives are enfolded in one single day's, or hour's, work which will bear fruit for many lives to come: to grasp Truth thus clearly is to express gratitude. Even were we the highest in all the world such rank would be as useless as a bubble if we did not make pure food for the Three Treasures....

[Great Master Dogen: Chief Cook's Instructions]

Giving up Everything

Tony Head, Lay Minister, O.B.C.

[The following article first appeared in *A Newsletter for the Lay Ministers of Throssel Hole Priory*, No. 9, January 1989.]

When I asked what it was good to write about, I saw the inscription on the back of my *Rhakusu*:

*Trust the Eternal,
Give up everything,
For the Jewel is in
Your open palm*

This inscription is not something that I comprehend in a concrete sense, worked out once and for all and then pigeon-holed for future reference; its meaning flows like water into all aspects of my training, now meaning one thing, now another, always pointing on-wards.

When I first began training in Serene Reflection Meditation, I made the common mistake of thinking that 'giving up everything' meant distancing myself from material possessions, and began disposing of books, records, and objects that I had accumulated. Though I was mistaken, my intention was pure, since it was the desire to clean up my life and live wholeheartedly by the Buddhist Precepts. From my mistakes, I was learning that 'giving up everything' pointed to the cultivation of non-attachment: to objects, ways of behaving, opinions, ideas, family, friends, and so on. The way to cultivate non-attachment is to learn to be still within meditation; from the stillness of meditation I can learn to see where I am clinging to something, how that clinging leads to suffering, and how by 'giving up everything' I can cut the roots of suffering for myself and others.

When we cling to selfish desires and opinions, suffering arises. I see this very clearly in caring for my two small children. When I have something that I want to do, and the children demonstrate quite clearly they have other ideas about what is important; or when I would like peace and quiet in order to be still and pause for reflection, and the children are playing chase or wailing to be fed, I then sense very clearly it is my attachment to, or desire for, a particular state of affairs which causes tension, irritation, anger, and suffering to arise. I have also found that it is just when, in the stillness of meditation, I see the arising of these attachments and let them go, that I cut the roots of suffering and just get on with what needs to be done, whether it is changing a nappy or whatever else, just sitting still within all the hullabaloo. The attachments that were the cause of suffering have thus become, and indeed always were, the *Dharanis* or Dharma-doors which lead to a greater unfolding of the Buddha's teaching.

* * *

GUEST DEPARTMENT NEWS

SUMMER FAMILY CAMP

Over the weekend of August 4-6 we are inviting our congregation and their families to hold a 'family weekend camp' at the Priory. During the course of the weekend, there will be opportunity for meditation, informal socialising, and for walks in the surrounding countryside. On the Sunday morning, we will celebrate the *Festival of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva*---a ceremony in which the children are important participants. Indoor facilities will again be available on the Saturday and Sunday nights at the Expedition Centre, Carr-shield. Alternatively, people may pitch tents in the Priory grounds. A provisional booking has been made at the Centre, but in order to make a firm reservation it would be helpful to know how many beds are needed. David and Karen Richards are organising the booking and would like to hear from families who would be interested in using the Expedition Centre facilities.

Please contact:

David and Karen Richards
82, Witton Street
Norton,
Stourbridge
West Midlands
DY8 3YE

Ph: (0384) 373301

* * *

CONGREGATION DAY

This year we will be celebrating the *Festival of Avalokiteswara Bodhisattva* on Saturday September 16 at the Sherwood Community Centre, Nottingham. In past years this has been an excellent opportunity for our congregation to play host to the monastic Sangha. The day's events will begin at 10.00am and finish around 4.00pm. Further details and directions to get to the Sherwood Community Centre will be included in the next issue of the Journal.

Co-ordinator:

Tony Head
33, Alexandra Road West
Chesterfield
Derbyshire
S40 1NP

Ph: (0246) 201915

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FORTHCOMING RETREATS

- May 5-7 - Weekend retreat which ends with the *Festival of the Buddha's Birth* on Sunday May 7.
- May 20 - One day retreat (Saturday) in Chesterfield, 10.00am to 4.00pm.
Contact Tony Head: (0246) 201915
- May 21 - One day retreat (Sunday) in Leeds, from 10.00am to 4pm.
Contact Angie Pedley (0532) 428699
- May 24-29 - Lay Ministry Retreat.
- July 10-16 - Summer Retreat week.
- July 22-29 - Meditation week.

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The Buddha and Indian Cosmology

Rev. Master Daishin Morgan, M.O.B.C.

[This edited transcript is in answer to a question about the Buddha's attitude towards the worship of a multitude of gods and devas which was prevalent during the Buddha's lifetime.]

The Buddha, as a man of his time, accepted as an expedient means the world view of the society in which he lived. The cosmology of that period viewed the different realms of existence as forming the multi-tiered Mount Sumeru. This symbolic mountain extends below ground as much as above, with the depths forming graduated levels of hells and the abodes of demons, while the heights are the location of the heavens with their multitude of gods. The halfway point at ground level, was the domain of human beings. The heaven realms were nominally divided into thirty-three heavens, with the Brahma heaven at the summit. Above the highest realm of the gods there were yet subtler aerial realms known as the realms of form, the formless realm, and the realm of neither form nor non-form. These represented subtle levels of meditation which, although advanced, were still not yet Nirvana.

The Buddha did not concern himself with the validity of this view, but used it to point out that all realms, however rarified, were still subject to change and decay and that even the highest gods had not yet realised enlightenment. Although they may be in the wonderful situation of the thirty-third heaven, the gods were still subject to the law of change and their heavenly state was not permanent. According to this cosmology, one became a god or resident of the Brahma realm as the result of good karma accrued from a moral life. The merit of a life of morality, whilst significant, is nevertheless limited and a time will come when it is exhausted, thus causing one to fall from heaven to some other, less desirable state. The gods

were therefore still caught up in the cycle of suffering. The Buddha pointed out the insufficiency of merely accumulating merit with the object of a favourable rebirth. He also made the point that it was obviously much better to be reborn in the realm of the gods than in the hells, and although the temporary goal of rebirth in the Brahma world would not in itself lead to liberation, it would nevertheless serve as an inducement to those who had not yet realised the necessity of leading a moral life: this point being given added emphasis by the complimentary teaching that immorality leads to the hell realms. Once his hearers had begun to practice morality, the Buddha could then lead them on to the higher teaching of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path which are the way to liberation.

The gods are frequently portrayed in the Scriptures and in Buddhist art as paying homage to the Buddha while undertaking to protect the Dharma and Sangha. Although this approach undoubtedly had a certain propaganda value in India at the time, there was a more important religious reason for it.

It is significant that the Indian gods were transplanted in their Indian forms to countries that had no knowledge of them before the coming of Buddhism. Indra and Brahma are amply represented in the art of Central Asia, China and Japan---cultures which had no significant contact with India before the events that lead to the spreading of Buddhism. Why was it that these cultures adopted gods as foreign to them as they are to us today? They successfully transferred to these countries because they had a significant part to play.

In looking at the reasons for things in Buddhism, it is always best to look at how any particular development relates to practice. In this case, the reason lies in the way that meditation works. Our practice of meditation is one in which nothing is rejected; whatever arises is allowed to be as it is so that we can come to know its true nature. There are no thoughts or feelings that are too shocking or terrible to be contemplated. Clearly one must not indulge them,

but if one does not know them, then one can never be free of them. The only real guard against our becoming enmeshed in delusion is to know it. Once we are converted from delusion, our knowledge of delusion guards us from making the same mistake again.again. It is in this respect that the gods are guardians. The process of gaining this knowledge is both fearful and dangerous, and so the gods sometimes appear in frightening guises.

The absorption of the Indian gods into Buddhism in the first place did not take place overnight. In fact it was a process that began in the Buddha's lifetime and which reached its peak many centuries later. There is danger in adopting familiar gods until they have been thoroughly converted. When Buddhism spread to other countries where the Indian gods were unknown, they served as the model for the local gods; they demonstrated the process of conversion that the local gods would need to go through in order to be absorbed. In Japan many of the local Kami ('Spirit') gods became identified with Indra and Brahma, and our own Samboko-jin, the protector of Zen Monasteries and devotees, was originally a mountain Kami.

Buddhism has a beautiful purity within it. It can look at anything and see the Buddha. We should not be too keen to judge and condemn, but seek instead this purity of vision which makes demons into Bodhisattvas and gods into guardians.

In our own culture we have already begun the process of absorbing the native gods, only our gods are closer to science and psychology than the supposedly more superstitious variety. The process of absorption is still in its infancy as we have yet to renounce the supremacy of our old gods since some still require their approval before they will accept the truths of Buddhism. Characteristically, Buddhism does not reject science or psychology; nevertheless we should beware of our worship of them. Buddhism was changed as it absorbed the old gods, and undoubtedly it will be changed as it absorbs those of our own time, but the

fact that Buddhism is kaleidoscopic should not cause us to make the mistake of losing the source. It is only by returning to the source and opening the true Dharma Eye, that we can discern the true from the false.

The gods do not hold a central place in either our practice or in Buddhism as a whole. They remain in the Scriptures and the iconography as an illustration of the important religious principle that nothing is rejected, all things, all beings, can reveal the Truth when they are correctly understood. There is a place wherein everything can be of value. Through an expedient means we are lead out of the realm of desire by first desiring heaven and then, when we realise that heaven is not enough, to awaken the desire for enlightenment.

It is important to realise that gods and Bodhisattvas are two quite different things although they have some functions in common. The Bodhisattvas represent aspects of enlightenment whereas the gods represent aspects of delusion that through conversion have become guardians.

* * *

The Warm Body of the Buddha

Rev. Mugo White, F.O.B.C.

[This article first appeared in the *Journal of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives*, Volume 3, Number 2, Summer, 1988. We are grateful for permission to publish it here.]

Few people have a clear idea of the meaning of life; all have an intuitive feeling that there is one. Our life's quest to find something 'fundamental,' however vague this notion may be, is an extremely powerful force in our lives and can be seen as the fourth Law of the Universe in action---'The Law of Dharma: evil is vanquished and good prevails.' Since all beings partake of the Eternal, that fundamental 'something,' we naturally gravitate towards each other, like drawn to like, deriving meaning in our lives from our relationships. Still, even in the most positive of relationships, that intimacy we long for is beyond our grasp for we attempt to hold on to something in another that cannot be separated off or fixed. It is like the story of the blind men who were asked to describe an elephant: each one, holding only a part of the elephant, described it according to their particular part. So it is with our efforts to find meaning in life: we may spend too much time in holding only a part of the elephant, believing we have found life's meaning in a particular relationship, idea or cause, etc. It is the grasping after (or the pushing away) of others which is the problem. Our quest for meaning is an *internal* one requiring us to look and live deeply within ourselves. In the process, we discover that 'internal' and 'external' are false distinctions and our relationships with 'others' take on a deeper meaning.

All from time to time find themselves rubbing only a part of the elephant; for example, it is common for trainees to feel a particular fondness for the priest

who first introduced them to Buddhism or gave teaching that was particularly pertinent to them as individuals. This very human sentiment is quite natural and understandable; however, at the same time, it should be kept in mind that the priest is a reflection of the teaching and, as such, is but a facet of the jewel of Buddhism, not the jewel itself.

Clinging to others can be identified in the way we invest trust in an individual. I once proclaimed that I trusted a certain monk "with my life." It was explained to me that this was beside the point, the real question being "Do you trust him with *his* life?" i.e. trust that he can and will deal with his own karma. The faith that all beings are doing their own training mercifully releases one to get on with one's own. This notwithstanding, nobody possesses perfect detachment; to think so would be to proclaim oneself or someone else God; the process of our lives is a constant interplay or flow of attachments and detachment, "always becoming Buddha." (1) The Buddhist Precepts point out clearly that *indulgence* of attachments either in the form of grasping or pushing away is what we have to curb in ourselves.

The relationships we have with our animal friends can give us invaluable pointers on how to deal with human ties. Some years ago I had a pet rat whom I loved and cared for. One day a monk asked if I'd like to give my rat to his niece who badly wanted one. I agreed, though parting with her was painful. Rev. Master heard of this and, realising my misunderstanding about giving up attachments, for I had seen it as a pushing away - a getting rid of - the object of my attachment, gave me another rat to care for. I have been surprised to find that in the process of cutting human ties one actually draws closer to one's fellow trainees. I had imagined that dealing with the desire for human companionship would mean a cold self-sufficiency, away from human company, but this has not been the case.

The Sangha is the living expression of Buddhism "if fully-digested, Preceptual Truth is their rule of life." (2) There is enormous and unmistakable intimacy within the harmony of the Sangha, but one cannot hold it in one's hand. We have to go beyond the holy and the unholy and allow our teachers and fellow trainees to go about the business of doing their own training and resist the very human temptation to elevate them in our own minds, the effect being to *seem* to create distance. To elevate oneself has the same effect. This is exactly the same situation described earlier where one hoped to find the meaning of life via one's relationships with others and found the relationships lacking in the deepest sense. Ironically, the shared life of the Sangha is where one *does* begin to know deeply and recognise something fundamental and unmistakable (the Buddha Nature) but this is as "two arrows meeting in mid air:" (3) there can be no holding on or pushing away. "Buddha recognises Buddha, Buddha bows to Buddha and Buddha disappears." (4) This recognition is not the prerogative of Buddhists; it is simply the result of treating everything with the utmost respect and gratitude. Recently, while in transit in a *Greyhound* bus station, I had need of help and approached an imposing Security Guard and, without thinking, addressed him as "Sir." I will always remember him, not so much for the way I and my luggage were spirited on to the right bus, but for his response to being addressed and treated respectfully. He had been recognised and something in him knew it. I was as surprised as he was.

One's teachers, fellow trainees and all beings are then as mirrors: with compassion, we see and recognise our True selves reflected in the mirror of our relationships. The more we dare to trust that others really are trying to do the very best that they know how, the more we can identify and deal with our own greeds, angers and delusions as they are seen reflected in our dealings with others. In STILLNESS we look into the mirror and see that *within* the swirling froth of emotion there is only stillness, the Buddha Nature. The strength of courage and depth of humility needed

to face and accept the self cannot be underestimated. This is particularly so if the trainee has gained a degree of certainty and clings to it, for there is the danger of mistaking the voice of the small self for the "still small voice," thus solidifying greed, hate and delusion in the very effort of trying to deal with it. It is advisable, from time to time, to check one's training with a priest. Checking not only helps ensure that one is going in the right direction, it also helps with the 'letting go' of one's experiences of training.

Although we, as trainees, look and live deeply within ourselves we can never isolate ourselves from others (either out of certainty or uncertainty), for we are in Truth not separate from one another. However, we must train ourselves:

"The Dharma Body of the Buddha cannot be seen so long as one is within duality for it is beyond birth and death, filling all things." (5)

We are taught to stand up straight in the presence of the Buddhas and Ancestors; it is a matter of maintaining our balance. If we continually grasp after others we tip forward, if we push them away we topple over backwards. Always we must stand straight and firm for we are always within the warm embrace of the Buddhas and Ancestors.

* * *

Notes

1. The Scripture of Great Wisdom.
2. From the *Kyōjukaimon* by Great Master Keizan, with commentary by Rev. Roshi Jiyu-Kennett, (Mount Shasta, California: Shasta Abbey Press, 1977), p. 5.
3. The Most Excellent Mirror Samadhi: see P.T.N.H. Jiyu-Kennett, *The Liturgy of the Order of Buddhist*

- Contemplatives for the Laity* (Mount Shasta, California: Shasta Abbey Press, 1987), p. 68.
4. The Ceremony of Recognition: Ibid., pp. 39-43
 5. From the offertory for the Festival Memorial Ceremony for Great Master Keizan.

* * *

THE TEN GREAT VOWS

OF

SAMANTABHADRA BODHISATTVA

1. To pay homage to all Buddhas.
2. To praise all Buddhas and their virtues.
3. To make great offerings to all Buddhas.
4. To confess and repent one's wrong deeds and hindrances.
5. To rejoice at the attainment of merits by others.
6. To entreat Buddha to set in motion the Wheel of the Dharma.
7. To beseech Buddha to remain in the world.
8. To be a sincere follower of the Buddha's Way at all times.
9. To assist all sentient beings for their own benefit.
10. To transfer one's own merit to all sentient beings.

[The Avatamsaka Sutra]

The Mealtime Ceremony - Ceremony of Life -

Norman Trehwitt

*We must think deeply of the ways and means by
which this food has come:
We must consider our merit when accepting it.
We must protect ourselves from error by
excluding greed from our minds.
We will eat lest we become lean and die.
We accept this food so that we may become
enlightened. (1)*

This verse, the 'Five Thoughts', which is recited before every meal reminds me that the meal is a great teacher. All things teach in their own way and the formal meal serves to highlight this even further; it is not an empty 'Zen' exercise as it may seem at first. For a lay trainee visiting the Priory, or at a retreat, the formal meal takes the activity of eating outside its functional context and helps to focus the the mind in a powerful way.

The meal becomes a ceremony in itself and centres the mind on the business in hand. What other people do around us is not our concern; we concentrate on doing our own training and not worry about other peoples' mistakes, but at the same time being mindful of those around us. Everything must be approached with a compassionate mind. In this manner we approach the table and our place setting with respect, reinforcing the point by making gassho.

The mealtime scriptures are recited as the bowls and cutlery are set out and the food is passed down the table, each person serving themselves. This demands concentration. In the first instance difficulties can arise when someone new to all this is trying to recite a scripture while carrying out this activity at the same time. Later, once these scriptures have

been learnt by heart, then it is necessary to avoid going into 'automatic pilot' and finding that the point the scripture is making is lost. Because we can see what is being eaten and how much by each person, the koan is highlighted and serves to demonstrate just how easily and subtly the Precepts can be broken. How many of us, I wonder, have mentally commented to ourselves on the large amount one person takes or the tiny amount on another's plate? I know I have! But this is none of our concern. How much or how little a person takes is none of our business. Mindfulness of one's own training is what really matters.

The need for mindfulness is emphasised during a silent meal. Lack of mindfulness is betrayed by noisy clattering of crockery and utensils. However, accidents do sometimes happen and a bowl or the like is dropped. This isn't a disaster. If it happens, we make gassho, pick up the dropped item, clean up any mess, and go on, trying not to do the same again. This was amply illustrated for me during breakfast at Jukai a couple of years ago. The bowl of peanuts was dropped as it was passed along the table scattering its contents everywhere. There was a horrified silence. Then the monk leading the meal quietly and calmly said, "Please clear up the nuts." The mess was cleaned up and the formal meal was not disturbed by what had happened. The important lesson here being that taking care---the effort of taking care---is what matters. If it goes wrong, it is not the end of the world.

The 'Five Thoughts' are often recited, not only before a formal meal, but also at the start of informal meals. The implications of each thought are quite profound and apply to all aspects of training.

'We must think deeply of the ways and means by which this food has come.' Apart from the obvious considerations of growing, purchasing, preparing and cooking of food, what of the spiritual implications? As we sit to eat, we may not have been directly involved in the preparation. But those who have been working in the kitchen have. A reading of the 'Tenzo-

kyokan' in *Zen Is Eternal Life* will make very clear the qualities a chief cook must exhibit and the sincere training required to fulfil this position.

All Chief Cooks were diligent in their work and, within this fact, we can find the original meaning of Buddhist training and its true character for it is the very marrow of rightly Transmitted Buddhism. (2)

The meal has come to us out of great compassion and the bow we make before raising the plate from the table is a bow of gratitude and an offering of our own gratitude and compassion.

'We must consider our merit when accepting it. Hunger is one reason for accepting food. But what is our 'merit when accepting it?' No one is unworthy of accepting the fruits of the another's training for we are all children of Buddha. But if the Buddha Mind has been awakened, this 'considering our merit' is asking if we are truly training. For if we do not train, we cannot see and come to know the Eternal for ourselves. Although the merit of another's training is never withheld, it does mean, in a way, we are letting someone else do it for us if we do not also train ourselves.

Man stands in his own shadow and wonders why it is dark yet only he can turn round. (3)

To 'protect ourselves from error by excluding greed from our minds' is to be mindful of our actions and to avoid over-indulgence, greed, which operates on the basis of an egocentric self. At its most primitive level, overeating and indigestion results. Continue to overeat and problems of ill-health may result. But greed can get very subtle. One can get attached to the quality of food, enjoying the flavour so much that the first two of the 'Five Thoughts' are forgotten. There is nothing wrong with enjoying food but to 'protect from error' is to avoid getting caught up in gastronomic obsession. The 'Fukusho-hampo' in *Zen Is*

Pure and beyond the world is the Buddha
Nature of the trainee;
O Holy Buddha, we take refuge in Thee. (5)

After this the clean, empty plates are raised up in a gesture of offering, the offering of our training in gratitude for the teaching.

But what happens when the lay trainee is not at the Priory and the rush and bustle of the world per-
meates? Does the meal become an absent-minded activity?
Only if we let it. Obviously it would be inappropriate
to perform a ritualised meal in a cafe or canteen or
at home with other pressures. But to just stop for a
few seconds and silently remember the 'Five Thoughts'
as to recall the teaching and renew the resolve to
continue training---wherever we are.

* * *

Notes.

1. From the *Shobogenzo* ['Fukushu-hampo'], by Great
Master Dogen, in Jiyu-Kennett, *Zen Is Eternal Life*,
p. 103.
2. Jiyu-Kennett, *Zen Is Eternal Life*, p. 185.
3. The *Kyofukaimon*, p. 9.
4. Jiyu-Kennett, *Zen Is Eternal Life*, p. 102.
5. Ibid., p. 110.

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NEWS.

Monastic Events: We are pleased to announce that Rev. Master Daishin returned from Shasta Abbey on March 2 after his three month visit. Rev. Chushin Passmore returned a few weeks' earlier at the end of his year's stay at the Abbey. We welcome back Rev. Master Daishin and Rev. Chushin. The community is now back to full strength and we are looking forward to the new monastic term.

Festivals and Memorials: Seven lay guests joined the monastic community for the *Festival of the Buddha's Enlightenment* on December 25. After the ceremony everyone enjoyed a splendid feast and later in the day gifts were exchanged and opened.

The New Year's Retreat was very well attended this year with nearly thirty guests here for the week. The *New Year's Eve* ceremony was celebrated late at night on December 31. Afterwards, everyone met in the dining hall to relax together & to see in the New Year. The *New Year's Day* ceremony followed the next morning. During the retreat, we also celebrated the *Festival of the Avatamsaka Scripture* on December 30, the *Festival of Maitreya Bodhisattva* [The Buddha to come] on January 1, and the *Festival Memorial for Great Master Seck Kim Seng* on January 5.

Forty lay guests attended the *Festival of the Buddha's Renunciation* on Sunday February 5; the *Festival of Avalokiteswara Bodhisattva*, the *Festival of the Buddha's Death* [Parinirvana], and the *Festival of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva* were also in February. The *Lotus Ceremony* was celebrated on Sunday March 5; all the children who came with their parents had an enjoyable time afterwards. The offertory for the *Festival for Samantabhadra Bodhisattva* is particularly fine and

is well worth quoting again:

....Samantabhadra's achievements and wishes are profound. He admonishes people to make the supreme resolve to attain Bodhi: He enables all those in the three states of knowledge and the ten stages of holiness to find the Truth. If the Ten Kingly Vows are carried out, only Buddhas can count the benefits: the bringing to fruition of enlightenment, as well as the studying of cause and effect, harmonise together in the mind to bring forth the realisation of the pure, undefiled Dharmakaya. The Bodhisattva of the greatest achievement, Samantabhadra, with His multitude of vows so vast and boundless, rides the six-tusked elephant with great dignity: with wisdom does He manifest Himself in the Seven-Jewelled Lotus. All the serenities of His Samadhi are invariably, sovereignly free: from the very beginning His wonderful virtues are all perfect and complete. He comes augustly to assist in the salvation of the world we live in: His supernatural responses and powers shake the great universe. Blessed be the One who lives on Omei mountain, the silver coloured world, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, the Bodhisattva Mahasattva of greatest achievement....

Memorial ceremonies have been celebrated for Mercie Hall, Karlfried Graf Durkheim, Catherine Walker, and Annie Gribben.

Outside Talks & Retreats: In February, Rev. Saido Kennaway conducted a weekend retreat at Gaia House, near Exeter. He then gave a public talk at Sharpham House in Totnes which was attended by about thirty-five people. Rev. Saido also ran an introductory retreat (afternoon and evening) for over thirty people in Newcastle-under-Lyme. On March 1, Rev. Jigen Bartley spoke to the local Women's Institute in Allenheads.

Later in March Rev. Fuden Nessi travelled to Manchester for a meditation group evening and to lead a one-day retreat. He also visited Harrogate to lead another retreat; several people from Leeds also came to this.

[The weekend retreat held at the Priory, February 10-12, focused on the theme 'Compassion in Buddhism.' It was well attended and, judging from the good response of those who came, a useful way of conducting our more advanced retreats. If any of our readers have suggestions for topics to be examined at future weekend retreats, please let the Guestmaster know.

Donations: The community is very grateful for the following donations: silk flowers, the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, Volumes 1 and 2, incense, and tassels; pencils, a calendar, car battery, and a tape recorder; shrubs and houseplants, garden twine, and plastic bags; many useful kitchen and other domestic items; cat and dog treats; and toothbrushes.

Over the New Year holiday period the Kitchen received a splendid assortment of food and drink including fruit and vegetables, rice, oats, tempeh and tea; soy and Worcester sauce; dried fruit, nuts, bread and cheese; chocolate, cake, honey, marmalade, biscuits, sweets; and fruit juice and non-alcoholic punch.

* * *

The Priory is in need of a machine 'palm-sander,' (electric-powered) for finishing woodwork projects. The kitchen requests a large-size pressure cooker. A rechargeable 'Wet-n-Dry' Hand Vac would also be much appreciated.

We thank our congregation and friends for their continued generosity and support.

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BOOKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT CONCERNING THE
LITURGY OF THE ORDER OF BUDDHIST
CONTEMPLATIVES FOR THE LAITY

AMENDMENT TO MIDDAY SERVICE:

Sections of the text of RULES FOR MEDITATION, on page 106 and 107, have been placed in parenthesis and are no longer recited. These sections emphasise cross-legged sitting which is often unsuitable for those not accustomed to it from birth. Alternative positions can be used successfully.

If your copy does not have the amended text—which will have been pasted over the original text—please let us know.

THE LITANIES BOOKLET:

In a previous Journal we informed readers of an addition to the Liturgy Book in the form of a Litany booklet. This was printed after the first batch of books had been sold and is now included with every copy. Please let us know if you need one.

We will gladly post either, or both, of the above to you free of charge; or you are welcome to ask for them when you next visit the monastery.

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